

THE Suffering Condition OF THE Servants of the Lord

At this day, Vindicated.

And the Reasons given why the People called *Quakers* do own the Doctrine of Christ, to continue in it, and to meet together in the Name and Fear of the Lord, to wait upon him, and worship him in Spirit and Truth, notwithstanding they meet with sufferings in this present time for so doing.

Bristol, the 6th. Month, 1662. JOHN AUDLAND.

Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my Law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings; for the Moth shall eat them up like a Garment, and the Worm shall eat them like Wool; but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation. *Isa. 51.7, 8.*

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect, it is God that justifieth. *Rom. 8. 33.*

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us; for I am persuaded, that neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Rom. 8. 35, 36, 37, 38.*

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*The suffering condition of the Servants of
the Lord at this day, vindicated, &c:*

THe good and blessed Day of the Lord is come, and the Heavenly Visitation of Life, wherein the Light of Righteousness is springing up unto many people, and many have received the blessed Visitation of the Lord, and are made partakers of his Heavenly Power, by which they are quickened and raised up unto newness of life, to serve him, and to follow him in truth and righteousness; and the blessed day wherein the Lord visited us, and the notable works which the Lord hath wrought, and his noble acts which he hath done, are not by us to be forgotten, but are recorded in our hearts, as things remarkable and considerable, to be remembered by us while we have a being upon the earth, and that with fear and reverence in our hearts unto the Lord our God, who is great and mighty, whom we have known to execute Judgement in righteousness, to the judging and bringing down of that which was once exalted; for when the acceptable Year of the Lord came unto us, Judgement was laid to the Line, and the Lord did arise to shake terribly the Earth, the loftiness of man was bowed down, and the haughtiness of man was laid low, that the Lord alone might be exalted; and the Earth reeled to and fro, and was removed like a Shepherd's Tent, and the Light of *Israel* was as a fire, and the holy One as a flame, to burn up the thorns and the thickets in a day; many faces gathered paleness, and hearts grew weak, and knees feeble, and many had their hands upon their joins, because of the great travel that was upon them, because of the mighty Power of the Lord which was made manifest in them, for the bringing down of that which had been exalted against him, and for the restoration of the oppressed Captive, that deliverance might

be known from the power of Satan, and from the bondage of corruption, that we being set free wherein we were held, might serve the Lord in truth and singleness of heart, and wait upon him, and follow the leadings of his Spirit, in the exercise of our hearts and minds in serving and worshipping the Lord our God; And so the God of Heaven hath revealed and made manifest the way of Life and Peace, the way wherein comfort and satisfaction to the soul is found, the Gate of Mercy, even the entrance to the everlasting Kingdom of Rest and Joy for evermore; which although it be strait and narrow, and a cross to the fleshly part, and earthly ground and wisdom, yet it is easie, pleasant and delightful living in the Spirit, and becoming little, even as a Child, for so must he become that enters in at the strait Gate, to eat of the Tree of Life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God: So we have found the way of everlasting peace, (through the rich mercy, and tender visitation of the Lord) walking in the Spirit, and living in that which mortifies the deeds of the flesh, being subject to the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here is rest to the soul; here is the sweet visitations of the Lord known, which are as the former and latter rain, to refresh the lowly in heart, and poor in spirit: Here waiting upon the Lord, the strength is renewed, and here the Lord speaks peace to people, even as they are in Christ the Power of God, growing up in him, who is the truth and the life, they are possessors of lasting peace (which God speaks not to the wicked) which is the portion of the upright in heart; and as the Lord hath made manifest the way of peace, life and everlasting happiness, he hath also discovered the contrary, even the way of misery, darkness and destruction, the way which is broad, and many in the lusts of the flesh takes pleasure in it, following the motions of the flesh, and the desires of the carnal mind, resisting the motions of Gods good Spirit, and hating the blessed Light of the Lord Jesus Christ, and so spends away their precious time, and in this state, that is to say in the flesh, resisting the Spirit of the Lord, they cannot serve God, nor please him, nor worship him in truth, though they may professe him in words, and draw near him with their mouth; yet being in the flesh contrary to the Spirit of Truth, the ear turned away from hearing of God's Law, their prayers are abomination, their plowing

plowing is sin; their sacrifice is as *Cains*, not accepted by the Lord, no peace from God, no true rest, no satisfaction, no beholding the countenance of the Lord, nor no assurance of the Eternal Inheritance which never fades away, but an earnest of wrath, pain, misery, anguish and trouble, which will come upon all who live and dye in disobedience of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And so we see the Way of Life to all that believe in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and the way of death to all who live in unrighteousness, and are not changed by the power of God, and translated from death to life, and from the Kingdom of darkness, into the Kingdom of the dear Son of God.

And these things are of great concernment unto us, and we see it is very needful to wait upon the Lord, and to follow the motions of his Spirit, that we may feel his power to preserve us in his will, out of the evil of the World, that so in the power of the Lord our God we may war a good Warfare, and finish our course with joy.

And verily this is a matter of great weight unto us, even to have our hearts exercised towards the Lord in obedience to his Will, in what he requireth of us, that we may have a Conscience void of offence towards him: And so the day of the Lord God being come, and his Eternal Power made known in many hearts, by which many are raised to serve him, and obey him, yea to worship him according to his own Will, and the leadings of his good Spirit; We are even constrained by the Power of the Lord to meet together in his Name and Fear, to wait upon him, and to worship him, and also to exhort one another in his holy Power, as the Spirit of the Lord directs; yea, and so much the more as the day appeareth: And this we find also to be according to the Scriptures of Truth, and practice of the Servants of the Lord in former dayes, who did not forsake the assembling of themselves together, but met often, and sometime in one place, and sometime in another, as they were directed in the fear of the Lord: And they that feared the Lord spake often one unto another, and the Lord bearkened and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his Name: And they shall

shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day that I make up my Jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own Son that serveth him: And this was in a time when the proud were called happy, and they that wrought wickedness were set up, and they that tempted God were delivered; yet even in such a time did they that feared the Lord speak often together, and also in the time when the Gospel of Christ was published by the Apostles and Ministers of Jesus, many were brought into the obedience of the truth, and were gathered from the Jews. Worship and way of service, [and they, to wit the Jews, could plead more justly for the Antiquity of their way of Worship, and their order in their Worship, than many who this day profess themselves to be Christians, and a reformed Church] and in that time did they meet together, sometime in a Chamber; sometime in an house, and sometime in an upper room, as the Lord directed them, and as they had opportunities; and gathered Churches which met at Houses, and waited upon the Lord, and exhorted one another, and might all speak one by one, as the Spirit of the Lord lead them, that all might hear, and all be comforted:

And we do not read that the Jews made a Law, (or the Romans either, who at that time had the Principality) that they should not meet above four together, or if they met five, or above, they should be fined,

Indeed the Jews who believed not, were bad enough, and persecuted the Saints from City, and halled out of Houses they that professed the Name of Jesus, and sometime scourged them; but they are evil examples to be followed, and it's pitty that any who profess themselves Christians, should do the like to any that meet together in the fear of the Lord, to serve him, and walk peaceably in godliness and fear.

And why may not more than four meet together lawfully to worship God, in the account of God and all just men? Why may not ten? Yea, and why may not a hundred and more? Provided still it be to worship God, and serve him. And why may not also some come in amongst them who are unbelievers, that are ignorant of the way of truth, that they may come to hear, and learn, and be convinced of all, and go away, and confess that God is there

there of strength; and if there be more that come upon the same account, it is also approved;

Sure that was a great concourse of people, when the Disciples were met in one place, where three thousand were pricked to the heart at one time. Had it been justifiable in the Jews at that time to hinder such gatherings of people together, or such Speakers as they were, who spake as the Spirit of the Lord gave them utterance? The Jews were very angry with them, and commanded them to speak no more in the Name of Jesus; but they obeyed God rather than man, and spoke boldly the Word of the Lord, and the Lord was with them, yea and filled their hearts with joy and comfort, though sometime they were put in the Stocks; and sometime in Prison.

So we do verily find both by the Testimony of the Spirit of God in our hearts, and also by the Testimony of the Scriptures, That our meeting together to worship the Lord, and to wait upon him, is according to the mind of God; and also to the practise of the Saints in former dayes; and although we be of the suffering-side, as the Saints were in times past, yet we are content in the will of the Lord to give up unto him in all these things: And surely if they that cause us to suffer, did but diligently mind and consider their way and weapons which they go on in, and war with, they may find themselves to be on the persecuting-side, and see the Saints did not so, neither war with such weapons; for the Saints weapons were not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds; for 'tis the spiritual Weapons that can and doth conquer the man of sin within, and can subdue every high thought and imagination; and bring under whatsoever is contrary to the Will of God: 'Tis the Eternal Word of the everlasting God that is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, which divides within, where no carnal Weapon can divide: And if any think we be not in the way of the Lord, let them come forth with spiritual Weapons, or with the best they have, laying aside all carnal Weapons, Club and Staffe, force and compulsion for that will never overcome a spiritual Enemy; it may kill outwardly, but cannot kill spiritual wickedness; and coming forth with these Weapons,
this

this is like men that profess Christianity; and would be far more
 comely amongst the sober and honest-hearted people; and far
 more like to the Saints, then belling out of houses by force with
 carnal weapons; and casting into prison for no other thing but
 owning the Doctrine of Christ, and meeting together to worship
 God; desirous to nothing else; to glorifying their rabid ex-
 ceptions; and every bad end to purge us as Christ did; as
 our study is to be his; and the prevailing Argument. There is a Law
 made lately, that will not allow you; and if you do, we must fine you;
 or we must take your Goods; or commit you to prison; or cause you to for-
 feit your Estates; (Therefore we charge you give over; if not, we will
 proceed against you, and break your Meetings, with carnal Weapons;

Qb? where is the spiritual Weapons, the power to convince gain-sayers, Gospel-Ministers that went forth without Club or staff; for say we, convince our Consciences, or else we dare not do it; for we may not disobey the Lord because of these things? To add we should have never thought of coming to do

Obj. Well, then, say they, you will be ruined; have you no wife and children? will you spoil your selves with these things? and yet I have heard that you are a good father and husband.

Ans. More is the pity, (say we) that we may not serve the Lord, and worship him; but such sufferings will be exercised upon us by a people that profess themselves Christians, and reformed ones too: Well, say we, we must commit our cause to the Lord, and even give up all to him, who knows how to deliver the righteous out of all their trouble.

Obj. *I but (say they) cannot you meet four, and no more?*

Ans. We say, We may not limit the Lord, neither in the things of God must we order ourselves. And again, if some could stoop to that, it would not serve neither

Obj. Then (say they) you must be forced, and then you, or some of you will yield, and then we will boast over you with these

Ans. But we say, that force with carnal Weapons, by pains and penalties, as it was not the way of the Lord, nor the practise of the true Christians, so neither doth it effect the end, for it will never make men truly religious, neither will it be for the better in the end to them that go about so to compel, no, nor yet any comfort in the mean time, for there is a Prick that meets with the Persecutors now and then, which stops their furious driving, and gives them no ease in their Way, as it was with *Saul* while he persecuted the Saints, and brought them down, both Men and Women, that believed in the Lord Jesus; and he is not a good example in that to be followed; for he made havoc of the Church, entering into every House, and haling men and women, committing them to prison, having Authority from the Chief Priests, and being exceedingly mad against them, (Acts 8.3. Acts 26.10, 11.) as he afterwards confessed; and as he went to *Damascus* with Authority and Commission, he was struck down for all his Authority, and heard a voice saying to him, *Why persecutest thou me?* it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And it will be very hard for all such who persecute the Children of the Lord, the Lord will smite them one way or another; if they be not smitten to their Conversion: But if the Lord smite them often, and they still go on to sin more and more; he will ease him of his Adversaries, and avenge him of his Enemies, and smite them with an irrecoverable stroke.

Obj. And if it be objected, That these were Jews that did not profess Christ, that thus persecuted the Christians, and it was evil done of them; but we are a Reformed Church, and we do it in zeal to Christ, that people might be all of one way, and the Law doth allow us to it.

Ans. 'Tis answered thus: The Jews had a zeal for God which was not according to knowledge, and they had a Law also, by which they judged the Holy One that he ought to dye; but although they supposed they did God service, and for the defending of the Law, yet indeed they fought against God, and they had as

much to say for their vway of Worship, it being ancient; and they which differed from them, their vway was but new in appearance: I say, the *Jews* might plead for their Way far more groundedly, than many now; especially people vvhich neither live in their Way of Worship, according to the *Jews* under the Law, no nor yet according to the Saints in the Primitive times; And those that profess themselves Christians, and yet persecute the Innocent, they are far more guilty than the *Jews* were, inasmuch as they both profess more Light, and also vvalke so quite contrary to their ovvn Profession; yea and to the example of Christ, vvhom they profess (and the true Christians) who said, *Love your Enemies, pray for them that persecute you; not persecute them that pray for you*: Neither had the Saints such Weapons to bring people into their Church, as is now used, but spiritual ones, mighty through God; and went forth in his Power; this brought people to be of one heart, and one vway, and to serve the Lord with one mind, which force, vvvith carnal Weapons, vvvill never accomplish, to bring people to be of one vway.

Obj. And as it's said, *But some will yeild; and then we will rejoice in that.*

Ans. 'Tis answered, That's a bad Work to force people, and compel them to deny that vvhich God hath made manifest to them to be truth; and the greater is their sin that so do. 'Tis said; that *Saul* compelled some to blaspheme against the Name of *Jesus*, when he raged so against them; but he afterward confessed it as a great sin: And though some did so, or do so, yet that is no confirmation to the persecutors, that they are in the Way of God; no, nor yet a true Testimony against the persecuted; that they are not in the Way of God; neither doth it truly convert men at all: Indeed force and compulsion may make some men conform to that outwardly, vvhich otherwise they would not do; but that is nothing of weight, their hearts are never the better, but are rather worse, and more hypocrites than before, for force doth but make Hypocrites at the most; for it is God alone by his powerful Word of Life operating in the hearts of people, that chan-

changeth them, and reneweth them in the Spirit of their minds, and brings them into the true Service and Worship, even to draw near him with their hearts, and to worship him in Spirit and Truth, and it's out of man's power, and that which God doth not require of men at this day, to force by penalties and carnal Weapons to this or that Worship, and is absolutely against the practice of the Saints, and the Spirit of Jesus, as also against Christ's Royal Law, which is, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them*: Now let every man make it his own case, *He saith his way is the way of God, and anothers is not*: Well then, would he be forced to leave his own way, and to go to the other, which he is not satisfied of to be according to the mind of God, especially when nothing is offered to convince his Conscience, or perswade his mind and understanding, but force and compulsion: Surely no man would be so dealt with in his own case:

Obj. But if it be said, *We have Power and a Law, and we are wise and learned men, and we would not be forced from our Religion, but we would force people to ours.*

Ans. This hath no weight in it at all; for you ought to put your selves in the same capacities as them you deal with are; and to consider your selves in their condition; they are as strongly (it may be more) perswaded in their Consciences by the Spirit of God, that their Way is right, than you are of yours. Well then, (weighing these things) would you be forced? Would you have others to deal so with you, if you were in their condition, and they in yours? Let God's Witness answer in all Consciences, and see if these vvays of forcing in matters of Conscience to God-wards, be not quite contrary to the practice of the Saints, and to the Royal Law of Christ.

Obj. Besides, though it be said, *But we judge we are in the right, and our way is the true way.*

Ans. It's answered. You may be mistaken, many hath; that have had thoughts their way was right; and while you have not the infallible Witness of God's Spirit with you, to testify to your Way, peradventure you may err as the former Forcers have done; and then you cause people to sin, if you could force them to blaspheme, and to deny, as *Saul* did; for if he that turneth a sinner from the error of his way, (who hath erred from the Truth) doth save a soul, and hide a multitude of sins, then they that force people from the Way of God, and cause them to err, doth bring souls into death, and so bring innocent blood upon themselves, yea the blood of souls, which will be a great weight in the day of God's account.

Obj. But if it be further said, *How then? how must we do (there is so many wayes) that people might be brought to one way to serve God?*

Ans. Do what God requireth of you, and no more, and then we shall never suffer by you, nor under you; *Do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God, this is better than the fat of Rams;* 'tis better than all the outward sounds and ceremonies; and bodily exercise, while the heart is far from the Lord. And if you judge you are in the right, and your way is right, come forth then with spiritual Weapons, mighty ones, in the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and let us see you shine forth in his Image; let this be your covering, your white Robes, even the Righteousness of Christ, which is the righteousness of the Saints, and lets see your meekness, patience, gentleness, and good example, your readiness by word and deed to convince gain-sayers in the power and gospel of Christ; your love to Enemies, your self-denial, your subjection to the Cross of our Lord Jesus; Oh this would reach our hearts, then God's Witness would answer to you, and this would answer the good part in all; and this is the way to bring people to be of one mind in the truth; this is God's way, this is the way the Saints walked in; this is the way we love and desire; and this also would be of good report amongst all good people; but the contrary

trary force and compulsion, with a hasty, froward, proud, envious spirit; with Staff and Club, and carnal Weapons, and Stocks, and prisoning of people, against whom there is no occasion, but concerning the Law of their God, and matters which are really of Conscience to God-wards; We say, this will never be justified by the Lord, nor effect the end neither; nor be of good report amongst sober people, nor answer the good part in people: And moreover, the Lord God of Life will turn his hand and power against them, that so turn their hand and power against his people for obeying him, and exercising their Consciences towards him, in waiting upon him, and worshipping him according to that which he hath made manifest to them; and such will be more inexcusable for persecuting now, than the *Jews* were in former dayes; for then the Saints met together, and professed the Name of Jesus, which the *Jews* did not say they believed in. Besides, it was in appearance such a new way, and so different to the Law and manner of Worship which the *Jews* had, that they had some seeming colour in their way; but now for they that professe the Name of Christ, and the Scriptures of the New-Testament, and the Saints practise, and Christ's commands to be obeyed, for these (all things considered) to persecute people for owning the commands of Christ, and for practising the same things (which they cannot but read) the Saints practised, and to haul people, and commit them to Prison for meeting in the Name of Jesus, to worship God, and to wait upon him; yea, and to be so far from cherishing such, as to act the very parts of them that made havock of the Church, and halled out both men and women, and was exceedingly mad, and caused some to blaspheme, and committed to Prison for the same things; it doth appear to be great evil, and to be even sin against knowledge, against their own Profession as Christians, and cannot be parallel'd with any of the Saints, but with the Persecutors, who hated and evilly entreated the servants of the Lord in former ages, who never could accomplish their end, though they caused many to suffer; and now to put all out of doubt, and to give all who opposeth the people of God in the way of God, an absolute answer, that they shall not be able to accomplish their end, and therefore it vould be far better to be

be quiet, and to mind the Royal Law of Christ, lest they by setting contrary, do bring innocent suffering, and blood upon their own heads, and incur God's heavy stroke of displeasure against them, yea and a fire be kindled in their own bowels, and a worm which shall not dye, and a dart strike through the heart and liver, and so the end be as bitter as Wormwood, and as sharp as a two-edged Sword; these are Instruments of War which the Lord hath in his Quiver, which is reserved for the day of Battle, when God pleads with all flesh by fire, and by his sword, when the slain of the Lord shall be many; when he will rain snares upon the wicked, fire and brimstone, and grievous tempests; this is the portion of their Cup: But indeed we do desire the conversion and salvation even of our persecutors; and therefore to put all out of doubt, as is before said, that there is no prevailing against the Lord, nor against the *Sion* of the Holy One, in whom the Lord is: We say, the living God of Heaven and Earth hath made manifest unto us the Way to Life, and called us to walk in it, and united our hearts together, (as many as lives in his Power) to serve him, and to wait upon him, and to meet together to worship him in spirit and truth; and we are persuaded to obey the Lord, and believe in the Lord, that he will strengthen us in his Way and Will unto the end: For our strength is in the Lord (and not of our selves) who hath called us to follow him through good report and bad report, and not to deny his Way because of sufferings, but to endure in patience, and let the Lord plead our cause in the hearts of his Enemies.

Obj. And if any say, *Why will you not swear? And why will you meet, seeing there is a Law against you for these two things?*

Ans. For ~~these two things~~, we say, We dare not disobey the Lord for fear of punishment or suffering outwardly; and we meet together in the Name and fear of the Lord,

1. Because the Lord God of Life requireth it of us, that we should meet in his Name and Power, and wait upon him, and edifie one another in his love and life, and in our meetings waiting upon the Lord, we have the Presence of the living God of Life with us, and the feeling of the virtue of his love in our hearts; and he lifts up his countenance upon us, yea and comforteth us by his free

free Spirit, whereby we know and are assured, that it is according to the mind and will of the Lord, and that he speaks peace unto us: And this being the real truth, let all the honest-hearted judge how we can in Conscience leave that which God requireth of us, in obedience to which we have God's presence with us, and do that which man requireth of us, contrary to the truth, in observing of which we should fall into condemnation, and feel God's anger, and the Testimony of his Spirit against us, to judge us, which would be greater sufferings in the inward man, than all the outward sufferings which we may meet with; for in these being faithful, the Lord comforteth our hearts.

2. Again, We meet together to wait upon the Lord, because we fear the Lord God, he hath placed his fear in our hearts, and we know him to be great and mighty, a great King above all Kings, and a great God above all Gods; that is able to do whatsoever he will in Heaven and in Earth, and in the Kingdoms of men, and we know he is worthy to be worshipped, and to have the heart given up unto him, for he hath power to change the heart, (which men by all their force cannot do) and to give true and lasting peace, which the World can never take away; and his fear being in our hearts, we account him Lord and Ruler in our Consciences, and worthy to be obeyed in heart, soul and spirit. And because we fear him more than man, we are bound in duty to obey him; for he hath power over both soul and body, which man hath not; for man can but kill the body, he hath not power to kill the soul; neither hath he power to redeem the soul; neither can man convert the soul by any force or penalty outwardly; therefore man doth but labour in vain, for he can neither kill nor cure the soul; but the Lord whom we fear, hath power, and is able to kill, and to make alive: And because we fear him more than man, therefore we chuse to obey him rather than man, & to meet in God's fear. And this being our condition, let the sober-hearted judge, How can we deny the Lord who hath all Power, and hath quickned us, & redeemed our souls from death, & go to obey man (contrary to Christ's Doctrine) who hath no power over the Soul. Surely as we stand in God's fear and counsel, we may not do this evil, and sin against our God.

3. Again

3. Again, We meet together to wait upon the Lord, because God hath made it manifest to us, and perswaded us, that the Way in which we walk, is according to his mind and will, and we look not for direction in our Religion, by mans Wisdom or Will, how we should serve and worship God; for we know it is God alone by his Spirit, that leads people in the exercise of the true Religion, as it is written; *I the Lord teacheth thee to profit, and leadeth thee in the way in which thou shouldest go;* and so we are content with our Religion which the Lord hath led us into, and in the exercise of it we have Gods blessing, filling our hearts with love and joy, peace and satisfaction, in which our souls are comforted, and we look not for another Religion contrary to that which we are in; but our hearts are fixed, vsiting upon the Lord, and we received it from the Lord, and not upon any such terms, as to continue in it till man made a Law against it, or spake against it, and no longer; but even as the Way of Truth was made manifest to us, so to press on in it unto the end: And we see the Wayes and Religions of men to be so changeable, sometimes one way, and sometimes another, that it appears to us, as if men received their Religion but till Orders of another sort of men to the contrary: And we see many people so ready to part with their Religion, and take up another, that gives us just ground to believe they found not the Presence of God with them in their Way and Exercise: And so it is but loose with them, and they can leave it upon occasion, rather than suffer the loss of any thing for it; and this makes us prize that which God hath made manifest to us, the more because we receive Refreshment from the Lord, in the exercise of our Religion, besides if we had been voyd of the true Religion till this day, we should have been as unstable as others, tossed about with winds of doctrine, and have known, no true rest to our Souls; but it is well known that we were of the same mind, that we are now, in the time of the former Poyvers, and we received not our Religion from them, neither, but from the Lord our God, neither was our Religion or we in the exercise of it, confirmed by any Law or Decree of theirs, but on the contrary did suffer much hardship under them, and by them,

vvhom

whom they cherished at that time in the Religion which they allowed, and they then said, *theirs was the right way*; and they *slacked and prisoned many who were contrary to them*; and now others say they are in the way, and use force and such like to them that differ from them. One said the Law is on our side, and we are in the right; the others say, The Law is on our side, and we are in the right, and you must conform, or suffer deeply. We say, None of these things can persuade our Consciences; but come forth in the Power of the Lord, as good examples with spiritual Weapons, if you will persuade us; for we cannot with a false Conscience leave our Religion which the Lord hath led us into by his own power, upon these things, but must rather give up to suffer in the Will of the Lord; for we know plainly, it is God alone by his power, that doth bring people into the true Worship: And this is according to the Scriptures of Truth, and also to the Service which is now allowed; for 'tis said in the Collect for that which is called the thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, Almighty and most merciful God, of whose onely gift it cometh that thy faithful people do unto thee true and laudable service: Now then, if it come onely by the gift of God that the faithful do true service unto God, then they that would force people from serving God according to his gift given them, would force them from the true and laudable service of God, and so make them set contrary to the gift of God, and unavoidably lead and force people from the true Worship of God, into hypocrisie, and a false, feigned, lifeless and heartless Worship, in which the Lord takes no pleasure. And so this being truly considered, we can put it to the Consciences of all that fear the Lord; so judge whether we can with a false Conscience leave our Religion which God hath led us into, and the exercise of it, according to the gift of God; by which onely true service is done to God; in which also we find acceptance with God through Jesus Christ, and go to a Religion in the will of man, contrary to the gift of God, by force and compulsion, where we could not act affectionately with our hearts, nor yet find the blessing and presence of God with us, acting contrary to the gift of God: Truly it is in our hearts and consciences, as the truth of the Lord, that we may not safely do it.

But if any should object and say, *Your Religion is but new, or of a late standing, ours is a hundred years old, or thereabouts, since Popery was brought from having the upper hand in this Nation; for they forced, but they were out of the way; but ours is a reformed Church.*

'Tis answered, That though the name or denomination by which we are distinguished from other people, be but of late years, which was cast upon us by some that mocked us, because of the Power of the Lord, which caused many to quake and tremble; yet the Life in which we live, and the truth which we profess, is ancient, and the practice in which we are exercised in the worship of God, is according to the truth and practice of the Saints of old: And so it might be said of the Saints, and of *Paul* when he was converted, and turned from the *Jews* Worship, that it was a new Religion; but it was the mighty Power of God that changed them, though many in that day opposed them. And so we say, Force now, with Prisons and carnal Weapons, is of the same nature as it was formerly, in the Papists and others; for they said they had a Law, and they were the true Church, and they forced about Religion, and killed many; and now here is but the same Argument, The Law saith so and so: Therefore we see the same Nature forcing now, as formerly; as it's said, *He that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit; even so it is now.*

And for being of a hundred years standing, this adds no strength to it at all; for the *Jews* Religion was far more ancient; and yet being in the persecuting nature, and resisting the Holy One and the Just, though they professed God with their mouth, yet that would not cover them, nor will it cover people now, to profess God with their mouth, while they are found in the Nature, steps and practice, of them who persecuted the Saints and Servants of God in ages past.

And for that which is said, That we are but of late years; We say, Men are not true Christians by Generation, neither by an outward Profession, but by an inward change in the heart, wrought by the Power of God in the Regeneration. And so if

it be but a few years in comparison, since we, or any of us were changed and turned to the Lord; yet it was in the time when the Lord was pleased, and saw good to visit us; and we can truly say it was an acceptable day and time when we were turned from darkness to the true Light and from the Power of Satan to God: And we are glad of it, and can say, Blessed be the Lord for it if it had been but yesterday, that any of us were renewed in the Spirit of our minds to God; for it is matter of joy to us, that the Lord hath gathered us in our day and time, from off the barren Mountains, into his Fold, to wait upon him, and to receive teaching and satisfaction from him: This is far more to us to know the Lord changing us in our day, and bringing us to know the things that pertaineth to our everlasting peace, than to have a large Profession of the Saints words, and yet to be out of the Saints Life, and out of the way where true peace and rest is found to the soul; and so the Lord having manifested his Truth to us, and brought us into the Religion in which he manifesteth his presence to us, we are content to wait in the Will of the Lord, and may not forsake our Religion, nor the assembling of our selves together, because man saith to the contrary, but walk according to the gift of God, by which onely it is, that true and faithful service is performed unto him.

4. Again, we meet together to wait upon the Lord, that our Consciences may be kept clear towards him, that we may have the answer of a good Conscience towards God, which if we should walk contrary to that which the Lord hath made manifest, here would be shipwrack of Faith and a good Conscience; for so it was formerly, if any forsook the Lord and his Truth after they had tasted of his good Word, if they fell away from that which they had once known and professed of the Truth and Gospel of Jesus, they made shipwrack of Faith and a good Conscience, and then they could not have the answer of a good Conscience, neither had they peace with God, and what remained if they continued so, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgement and fiery indignation, which will devour. And therefore we knowing the preciousness of the answer of a good Conscience towards God, do prize it, and esteem it as a Jewel of great worth, and we

may not forsake the way of the Lord, wherein we have the answer of a good Conscience (because of outward force) & go into that in which we should suffer anguish, & have a certain fearful looking for of judgment; and a sting in our own consciences; therefore we can put it to all who fear the Lord to judg of, if it be not safe for us to abide in the way of the Lord; and to be faithful to him, though we may meet with sufferings in this world.

5. Again, we meet together in the fear of the Lord, and own the doctrine of Christ to live in it, because we are perswaded in the fear and power of the Lord God of life; who is our strength, that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which we have in *Christ Jesus* our Lord; the love of God is so comfortable, and his favour is so refreshing to us, and the testimonie of his spirit is so satisfactorie in our hearts, that we are perswaded, nothing will be able to separate us; our strength is in the Lord, and he is all-sufficient to keep us through all, by his mighty power, unto the end waiting upon him, and abiding in his power, he is able to save to the uttermost; and this were the Saints formerly perswaded off, that nothing should be able to separate them from the love of God, & they met with many hardships & were oftentimes cruelly intreated, & shamefully handled as the *Scriptures* declare; yet through all the Lord was with his people, and comforted their hearts in their following of him, and the love of God abounded to them and in them, and they were Conquerors through him that loved them. Now if any at that time denied the truth for fear of man, or any other thing, they came to suffer in there hearts, and to feel sorrow in their inward man; for when iniquity enters into the heart, it darkens the understanding, and also the creature loseth the sence of the love of God; and if there be not repentance, and a returning unto the Lord, Iniquity grows more strong, and love grows cold in such, and the heart grows worse and worse, and is hardned by degrees against the Lord and his people, and then there is a separation from the love of God, & the feeling, and earnest of sorrow and tribulation upon every one that doth evil; therefore we are perswaded that it is safe for us to wait upon

upon the Lord in the way which he hath made manifest unto us, that so we may receive the power to renew our strength, that we may walk on in the path of life, and nothing separate us from the love of God which we have in Christ Jesus. Shall tribulation, or affliction, or principalities, or powers separate us from the love of God? Shall force by carnal weapons, or Prisons cause us to deny that which God hath made manifest unto us? Is there Powers against us, Thrones against us? well, this is safe for us, to abide in the counsel of God, that we may always feel his love in our hearts; and if we suffer, let us suffer here, because of our faithfulness to the Lord: If we must go to Prison, let us stand in the power of God, that his love, and life, blessing, and heavenly presence may bewitch us: Better to suffer outwardly in prisons, and holes, & have the love and presence of the Lord with us, then to disobey the Lord, and walk contrary to his gift, and so suffer inward anguish and sorrow of heart, and something separate us from the love of God, and then who can speak peace to us, if the Lord speak trouble; but if the Lord speak peace, it's no matter though man may speak trouble; though the wrath of man may rise high, yet he that doth whatsoever he will in heaven and in earth, he can make it to turn to his praise, and the rest of it he will restrain; and blessed are they that have the Lord with them, on their side; he speaks peace to them in the midst of all, his love refresheth our hearts, and so to put all out of doubt, we are perswaded in the power of the Lord, that nothing will be able to separate us from the love which we have in our Saviour; and here it is good to abide, and not to give one foot back, to give any ground unto the enemy, but to continue where the love of God is with us, and his blessed presence with us, comforting our hearts, which people doth not find with them in disobedience, walking and acting contrary to what the Lord hath made manifest to them; and so we can put it to the Consciences of all people who have any sense of the love of God in their hearts, Whether it can be safe for us to forsake the Way of peace and rest which God hath made manifest unto us, and in which we have the Love of God with us, and to go into a Way by force, into which the Spirit of the Lord doth not lead.

lead us, where we shall find anguish and sorrow, and some thing separating us from the Love of God, and where God would not speak peace to us, but trouble; surely we are perswaded to abide in that which the Lord hath made manifest to us, and our faith is in the power of God, that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God.

6. Again, we are perswaded to continue in the Way of Truth, meeting together in the fear of the Lord, to serve him, because we find the Lord requireth of us to bear a faithful Testimony, and witness to his Name and Truth, which he hath made known to us at this day; and though man require the contrary, and would force us to yeild, yet we may not deny the Lord and his Truth, but must bear witness to his Name in obedience to his Will; for we are not our own, but the Lords; neither must we serve our selves, nor do our own Will, nor the Will of others, whose Will is not according to the Will of God; but we must serve the Lord, and be faithful to him; and we see we cannot serve two Masters, nor cannot be partakers of the love of God, if we be in the love of the World, and follow after the lusts of it; and if we love any thing more than Christ, we should not be true Disciples and followers of him.

And if it be objected, Why cannot you do as men would have you? What, God knows your hearts, and you may keep your hearts to your selves, and conform outwardly for all that.

It's answered, Nay, we cannot, because God requireth it of us, to bear witness to his Name and Truth; and we may not deal doubly or deceitfully in shewing that before men, which we are not in our hearts to God for the people that God hath formed to himself, must shew forth his praise. And though it be true, that God knows the heart of every one; yet he looks for fruit also to be brought forth, that he may be glorified. It is recorded in the Scriptures, that there were many occasions sought against Daniel, but they could find none against him, except it were concerning the Law of his God; and they that hated him, consulted to get a Decree, that none should ask any Petition of God.

God for man for thirty dayes, save of the King, if he did, he vvas to be cast into the Den of Lyons: and the Decree vvas sealed according to the Law of the *Medes and Persians*. Now it cannot be denied but *Daniel* might have prayed to God in his heart, and his evil-wishers have knowen little of it; but he vvas taught by the Lord to pray openly, and to confess unto him, that he vvas great, mighty and poverful. And so though the Decree vvas sealed, he (as if he regarded it not) went and prayed to his God three times a day upon his knees, vwith his Window open, and his face towards *Jerusalem*, and so held forth his Testimony, and bore witness to the Lord, that he vvas worthy to be sought unto, and that he vvas not to be limited (by an outvvard Decree, though a strong one) from praying and calling upon the Name of the Lord, and the Lord vvas vwith him; and though he suffered the adventure of being cast into the Lyons Den, yet the God of Heaven vvas his Preserver, and he held forth a precious Testimony, and God vvas much glorified; for it was said, yea and proclaimed through many Nations, that all should fear and worship the God of *Daniel*, for there was no other God that could save in such sort.

And also the three Children that vwould not bow, though the King had commanded it, that vwhen the voice of the Musick was heard, all should bow to the Image which he had set up; yet they vwould not obey, for it vvas contrary to the Law of their God, and great Wrath vvas against them; and the Furnace vvas very hot, yet the Lord saved them, and they bore a precious Testimony to the Lord in obedience to his Law, and the Lord was much glorified, and vvas proclaimed through many Nations to be the onely and true God, and the King himself did praise and honor, and extol the God of Heaven, all whose Works are Truth, and his Wayes Judgement, and those vvho vvalk in pride, he is able to a base.

But now if any should say, *These were Heathen Kings; and so not to be obeyed.*

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To answer, They are more excusable therefore, than those
that in words profess themselves Christians, and Scriptures, and
the Saints practise; and yet are found persecuting those who live
in the Power of the Lord, and forcing by pains and penalties, not
according to, but quite contrary to the practise of the Saints,
whose Words they profess, and are found in the very steps of them
who persecuted the Saints and Servants of God, as the Scrip-
tures testify; and are so far from the Doctrine of Christ, as to
forgive trespasses, and to do as they would be done unto, and to
love enemies, and to pray for them that persecute them, that they
do absolutely trespass against them who give them no just occasi-
on, and do to others as they would not be done unto, were it
their case, (and let God's Witness judge) and doth even hate
and cruelly handle their Friends, who wish them well from their
hearts, and persecute them who pray for them. And surely, for
these things will the Lord visit, and in the mean time we find that
the Lord requireth it of us, to be faithful to him in what he hath
made manifest unto us, that we may bear a true Testimony, and
faithful Witness to the truth, and for the Lord, that he may glo-
rify himself by us; for we are not our own, but his, who hath
formed us, and called us to follow him.

And therefore let the wise in heart judge; Can it be safe for us
to lose our Testimony, and to cease following the Lord, and living
in that which he hath made known unto us to be his mind and will
concerning us, in which we have the Arm and Power of the Lord
with us, and him to take our parts, and to go to that which he
hath not called us unto, where we could bear no Testimony for
him, (for he that goes from the Truth which God hath made ma-
nifest, loseth his Testimony) where fruits would be brought forth
unto death, and not unto life, and the hand of the Lord will turn
against such; for them that honor the Lord, he will honor; but
they that slight his Counsels, and despise his Will, shall be light-
ly esteemed; all which duly considered, we cannot (as we live to
God) but bear witness to his Name, and hold forth that Testimo-
ny which the Lord hath committed unto us.

7. Again, We are given up to obey and serve the Lord, ac-
cording to that which he hath made known unto us, because no man
must

must give an account unto God for us, or answer for us in his day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be manifest, and he will reward every one according to their deeds: But we must stand before the Judgement-Seat of Christ, to receive a portion from him, and not others for us: Therefore we may not deny the Lord because of Force, Pain, Prison, or Penalties, because they that so force us, will not answer for us, though weight enough may be upon themselves; yet that would not free us if we should forsake the Way of the Lord made known to us: And let all people in soberness judge what reason there is that others should force us from that which we believe, to that which they believe; and yet if we perish by that means, they can neither help us, nor answer for us: Is it not therefore meet, that we should live in that Way in which we dare dye, and give up all unto the Lord in, and not be forc'd out of that Way in which we have peace and love, and the presence of the Lord with us, into a way where pain and anguish would fill our hearts; and leanness and emptiness would be upon our souls; and yet they that forced us from our good Haven and safe Harbour, where we lay at Anchor safe from the storm, would neither bring us to any sure resting place, nor yet preserve us from the Winds and Storms, and terrible Tempests; but we must by reason of such a force, unavoidably suffer shipwreck: We say, We may call Heaven and Earth, yea Angels and all just men, to bear witness to our Cause; yea, and the Eternal God of Life, in whose hand is the breath of all living, to judge between us and our persecutors in this matter.

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*Some Queries to any that profess them-
selves Christians, and yet are Per-
secutors of them, who at this day are
sufferers for Conscience-sake.*

QUERY I.

VV Hether is it well done, or evil, for them that
profess themselves Christian Magistrates, to
cast into Prison people who are Christians;
who have God's Power and Life with them,
and in them, that judgeth the Wicked, and turneth the Heathen
to the knowledge of God?

QUERY II.

Whether any do come to the knowledge of God till they be
turned to Christ the true Light that shineth in the hearts of true
Christians, in which they have God's Power and Life with them,
and in them, which they dare not sinne against, though they
suffer?

QUERY III.

And whether they are not such Christians that suffer perfec-
tion for keeping the Commands of Christ, and do abide in his
Doctrine, yea or nay?

QNE.

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QUERY IV.

Whether is it not better for Christians to obey Christ, than man, whose Commands are contrary to Christ's Commands? Judge and answer as in God's Presence, in which all must give an account to God in the last day.

QUERY V.

Whether did Daniel well, or did he evil, in petitioning and praying to his God, when Darius the King had signed the Decree, That whosoever should ask any Petition (Dan. 6.7.) of God or man for thirty dayes, save of the King, should be cast into the Den of Lyons.

QUERY VI.

Also, did the three Children well, or did they evil, in suffering their bodies to be cast into the hot fiery Furnace, Dan. 3.20. because they could not actually obey the King's Command, because it was contrary to the Command of God.

QUERY VII.

And further, Was it evil in Mordecai, or was it good that he kept the Law of his God, contrary to the King's Law, (Esth. 4.2.) in going to the King's Gate in Sackcloth, when evil was intended against God's people, yea or nay?

QUERY VIII.

Did the Apostles well, or did they evil (who were Christians) in obeying the Commands of Christ, before the Commands of men, especially when the Commands of men were contrary to the Commands of Christ? Judge, and let the

Truth answer, and whether it is well or evil in Christians to do so now, yea or nay?

QUERY IX.

If it be said, There were Heathen Kings that thus persecuted God's people, we query, Whether they that profess themselves Christian Magistrates, be not more inexcusable in the day of Christ, in living contrary unto more knowledge, who persecutes the followers of Christ in righteousness, than the Heathen Rulers were in the times of ignorance? Read and consider.

QUERY X.

Whether Christ's followers now in righteousness meeting together in Christ's Name, and in his Spirit to worship God, be in the well-doing, or in the evil? Let Truth speak, that God may be glorified.

QUERY XI.

And if such Worshipers together in Christ's Name and Spirit, be in the well-doing, Whether they ought not by Christian-Magistrates (who have the Power) to be preserved in outward peace from the violence of the Wicked, who are filled with envy against the righteous, as they were in all ages, and from the hands of the Heathen that combineth together to do wickedly.

QUERY XII.

If the Church be in God, (2 Thess. 1. 1.) and God be in all places, and the Church be the Household of Faith, then we query, If the Church be met together in some place, whether it be not according to the practice of the primitive Saints, and according to the New Testament, and the tenor of the holy Scriptures, yea or nay?

QUERY

QUERY XIII.

And was it lawful for Christians to meet together in an upper Room in the Apostles days, (as in *Acts* 1. 13. and *Acts* 20. 8.) and is it not lawful for Christians to meet together so now? Or is there any Law of Christ to the contrary? And are they not his Laws that Christians ought to mind and keep concerning the Worship of God, yea or nay?

QUERY XIV.

Whether Christians as concerning their Worship to God in Christ Jesus, ought not to hear Christ alone, whom all ought to hear, and receive his Counsel in their Consciences? And whether it is not his right to rule in the Consciences of Christians in the Worship of God, and in things appertaining to it, yea or nay?

QUERY XV.

Whether any thing ought to be imposed by Christian Magistrates on the Consciences of any true Christians now, as concerning their meeting together in the true Worship of God, or commanding them to swear, or they must suffer, as it appertaineth to Conscience; or is it Christ's right there to command? Or whether swearing, or fearing to swear, be not, or ought not to be matter of Conscience to all, yea or nay?

QUERY XVI.

Whether Christian Magistrates imposing swearing on Christians Consciences, or any other thing contrary to Christ's persuasions in the conscience, and contrary to the holy Scriptures, be right in the sight of God, or will stand approved in the day of account, yea or nay?

QUERY XVII.

Or whether is it right for Christian Magistrates to impose any thing on Christians consciences, before they convince them that the things imposed are lawful to them in the sight of God, yea or nay? Read with patience, and consider.

QUERY

And if this be denied by Christian Magistrates, and they do not convince Christians of the lawfulness to God of the things they do impose, which may cause great sufferings to the righteous, Whether it may not incur the anger of God also against themselves, and cause God to impose that upon them, which may be greater suffering in their inward man, than all the outward sufferings of the innocent in this time, yea or nay?

Consider these things in the fear of God, and let Truth answer.

John Wilkinson.

Therefore thus saith the Lord, Ye have not obeyed me in proclaiming freedom every man to his Brother, and every man to his Neighbour: Behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the Sword, to the Pestilence, and to the Famine, and I will make you a terror to all the Kingdoms of the Earth, Jer. 34. 17.

The End.